

Frequently Asked Questions about the NMFS Policy Directives System (PDS)

About the PDS

1. What is the PDS?

The PDS is the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Policy Directives System. It translates the ideas, goals, or principles contained in the NMFS mission, vision, and strategic plan into action-related directives.

NMFS Policy Directive (PD) 30-101 establishes the PDS system. NMFS Instruction 30-101-01 explains how to implement the system.

2. How is the PDS organized?

There are three types of directives in the PDS. Policy directives are statements of important, high-level direction that guides decisions and actions throughout the NMFS. Procedural directives describe how to implement a particular policy. Policy and procedural directives are issued by NMFS Headquarters. Supplements which are issued by NMFS Regional Offices and Science Centers contain detailed information on implementation of procedural directives.

3. How is each directive identified?

The cover page of a policy directive has a blue banner. Procedural directives have a yellow banner. Supplements have a green banner.

4. What is an OPR?

The Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) develops and coordinates a particular PDS directive and guides it through the approval process.

5. Who administers the PDS at the NMFS?

The Office of Policy administers and monitors the PDS.

6. Who can I contact for information or assistance on writing a directive?

The Office of Policy (F/P) can help answer questions about writing a directive.

Writing a Directive

1. The NMFS Correspondence Handbook requires writers to use the "Courier New (preferred) or Courier font; 11 pitch." Do PDS writers follow this?

No. The PDS has different requirements. PDS writers use "Times New Roman font; 12 pitch." OPRs may diverge from this requirement and use fonts such as Courier New only when necessary for product specifications or similar documents.

2. What is the effective date of a directive?

The effective date is two weeks or later after the directive is signed by the approving authority.

3. How do I set up the banner pages?

Templates for preparing banner pages are available on the PDS home page in the Tool Kit.

4. Is the banner page intended to be a separate page before the text of policy directives, procedural directives, and supplements?

The banner page is separate for procedural directives and supplements. The narrative begins on the second page for procedural directives and supplements. The narrative begins on the first page (banner page) for policy directives.

5. What writing style should I use when writing a directive?

Writers should use the active voice. Use passive writing only when necessary.

6. If you define acronyms in the policy directive, do you have to define the same acronyms in the procedural directives and supplements?

Spell out the entire phrase the first time used with the acronyms in parenthesis for each directive. After that, use the acronym. This allows documents to stand alone.

7. References should include "policy-related" terms. What are "policy-related terms"?

References are a glossary of essential words you feel require interpretation and explanation for the reader. NMFSPD 30-101 provides an example.

8. What is the difference between superseding and rescinding a document?

A document is superseded if it is used as the basis for, and referenced in, a new directive. A document is rescinded if it is no longer needed, and is not referenced in a new directive.

Numbering Directives

1. How do I number a policy directive?

A policy directive title begins with “NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE POLICY DIRECTIVE.” It is followed by a space and the PDS number. The PDS number includes the series number, followed by a dash, and a directive number beginning with 101 and continuing up to 999. For example, the title for the first policy directive in the 05 series is “NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE POLICY DIRECTIVE 05-101.”

2. How do I number a procedural directive?

A procedural directive title begins with “NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE INSTRUCTION” or “NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE MANUAL.” It is followed by a space and the PDS number. The PDS number includes the series number, followed by a dash, the policy number, followed by a dash, and an instruction or manual number beginning with 01 and continuing up to 99. For example, the title for the first instruction under the fourth policy directive in the 05 series would be “NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE INSTRUCTION 05-104-01.”

3. How do I number a supplement?

A supplement title begins with “NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE <Region Name> SUPPLEMENT <NUMBER>”. For example, the title for the third Northeast Region supplement which supplements NMFSI 05-104-01 would be: “NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE NORTHEAST SUPPLEMENT05-104-01-03-NER.” More than one instruction or manual can be listed.

Coordination Procedures

1. Who signs policy directives? Procedural directives? Supplements?

The approving authority signs directives. The approving authority for policy directives is the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries. The approving authority for procedural directives is the director of the OPR. The approving authority for supplements is the NMFS Regional Administrator, Science Center Director or Headquarters Office Director.

2. How can we track our coordination?

The PDS home page has a tracking system. Each Financial Management Center (FMC) has a contact person who can track their PDS documents. F/OP is responsible for tracking parts of the coordination process.

3. What is the schedule for updating a policy directive?

Ninety calendar days prior to a directive's anniversary date, F/OP sends out a reminder notice to the OPR to complete the update process before the end of the annual cycle. The anniversary date is based on the effective date on the directive.

The OPR produces a final version of the directive by day 60 in the 90-day update cycle. Coordination with affected offices as well as dispute resolution are completed by this time.

The last 30 calendar days of the 90-day update cycle are reserved for General Counsel for Fisheries (GCF) review and signature by the AA.

4. What is the schedule for updating a procedural directive?

Ninety calendar days prior to a directive's anniversary date, F/OP sends out a reminder notice to the OPR to complete the update process before the end of the annual cycle. The anniversary date is based on the effective date on the directive.

The OPR produces a final version of the directive by day 60 in the 90-day update cycle. Coordination with affected offices as well as dispute resolution are completed by this time.

The last 30 calendar days of the 90-day update cycle are reserved for General Counsel for Fisheries (GCF) review and signature by the approving official.

5. What is the schedule for updating a supplement?

Each supplement must undergo an annual review process as specified by the OPR.

6. Must we provide a background summary for policy and procedural directives?

A background summary is required. The OPR must include a short explanation of the changes made to the policy or procedure from an earlier PDS policy (if revised). If the directive is new and does not supersede previous directives, the OPR must include a short summary highlighting the major points of the directive.

Posting and Record Keeping

1. Where will directives be posted?

All directives are posted on the PDS Web site.

2. Who will post the directives?

F/OP will post all PDS directives.

3. When I submit my directive for posting, what format should be used?

After a directive is signed, FMCs give it to F/OP as a Word file; F/OP will convert it to a .pdf file before posting.

4. Who maintains original, signed copies of PDS directives?

Original, signed copies of policy and procedural directives are maintained by F/OP. Supplements are maintained by the OPR in the Headquarters Office, Regional Office or Science Center.